

Notts News

Newsletter of the Nottinghamshire Chess Association

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Annual General Meeting

Tuesday 8 July, West Bridgford Chess Club, 7:30 p.m.

Inter-County U150 semi-final

Neil Graham and Drag Sudar

After sweeping aside Essex in the national quarter-finals, Nottinghamshire encountered some Yorkshire Grit in the semis and were unable to progress to the finals. This was Notts' sixth successive County Under 150 appearance at this stage, but once again the team faltered and failed for a fifth time.

There were five early draws on Boards 1, 3, 6, 7 and 13; then the away side took an early lead when Oliver Exton comprehensively outplayed his opponent, culminating in a temporary queen sacrifice that allowed the local player to queen a pawn with a decisive attack. After that though there were more draws, with neither side being able to add a decisive result to the scoresheet.

However, the main concern was that nowhere across the 16 boards did Notts hold a significant advantage, and as the match proceeded into the final hour and a half, those positions where we were struggling finally gave way. Alex Combie tried for too much, Keith Walters lost after being the exchange down for a considerable time, Stan Cranmer went down in the endgame and finally Bob Taylor lost a bishop when his mating threat was easily repelled. The only reply came from Brian Thompson, who once again showed his adeptness in securing a win in an ending where patience proved a virtue. Brian Hayward might have scored a third win, but he had only

two minutes left with his opponent sitting with over an hour on the clock and this time pressure again meant a drawn game.

With Notts trailing by 8–6 it was pointed out that even if we won the final two games, the match would be lost on board count. Consequently David Toms with two doubled pawns against a knight ended his game with just two kings on the board whilst I [Neil] thankfully didn't have to try to win a most complicated endgame a pawn down but with counterplay in compensation. So out of 16 games Notts were victorious in just two and Yorkshire relished their four wins. It's been another outstanding year for the Under 150 team, but let's hope we can overcome the apparently insuperable semi-final hurdle next year!

Best game prize

A final reminder that entries for the Best Game prize should be sent to David Levens by Monday 30 June. All entries will be anonymised before being sent for judging.

Entries from the lower divisions are particularly encouraged. If enough are received, additional prizes may be awarded.

A postscript

Ian Kingston

This is the last issue of my three-year stint as editor of *Notts News*. It's been a great pleasure to write, compile and edit these bulletins, and I hope that you've enjoyed reading them.

I hope – and since the NCA is a democratic organisation I can't do any more than that – that this is just a sabbatical. If circumstances permit I hope to stand for election to this post again in 2009. Until then, I wish my successor the best of luck, and look forward to seeing some fresh ideas in *Notts News* next season.

Yorkshire U150–Nottinghamshire U150

15 June 2008

Board	Grade	Grade		Grade	Grade
1	James Carpenter	145	½–½	Mike McBeth	149
2	Clive Davies	147	1–0	Alex Combie	148
3	Andrew Bak	146	½–½	Will Place	147
4	Mark Birkin	145	½–½	Tim A. Lane	145
5	David Patrick	142	0–1	Brian Thompson	141
6	Jonathan Swallow	142	½–½	Steve Hunter	141
7	George Bak	140	½–½	Drag Sudar	138
8	Bien Cuaresma	138	½–½	Brian M. Hayward	136
9	Randolph Donahue	136	½–½	David Toms	138
10	Tom Pitcher	106	1–0	Stan Cranmer	132
11	Paul Howden	135	1–0	Keith Walters	130
12	Robin Browne	134	½–½	Neil Graham	129
13	Rupert Jones	134	½–½	Jonathan Day	127
14	Paul Clarke	133	1–0	Bob Taylor	128
15	Martin Simmonds	132	0–1	Oliver Exton	126
16	Nick Mahoney	128	½–½	John Tassi	128

9–7

Officers' Reports

President'

David Levens

Though there has been some decline in numbers of clubs and also in the numbers of individuals playing competitive chess over the years (first highlighted in a study done by Brian Hayward when he was President), thanks largely to a big influx of juniors I believe the decline has been largely halted. There now appears to be juniors playing for several clubs in the league: WNCC, Ashfield, Long Eaton, Nomads, Newark, Gambit and, I believe, Grantham.

Clearly not everyone wants to invest time and effort in junior membership and there is no reason why they should. However, it's worth pointing out that most other 'sports' have in place a well-thought-out youth or junior policy. Juniors eventually become adults; they are the future of chess in this county. Even though a fair number may stop playing later, many will continue. Right now the strength of our juniors is unsurpassed throughout the UK. Several of our youngsters have represented England abroad in individual tournaments and International team competition. I have no doubt that some of them could well go on to gain FM, IM or even GM titles. This season Notts Juniors finished equal first with Wey Valley, coached by IM Mike Basman, and thus have won the National title for the first time in 36 years! Those of us involved believe that next year's intake will do even better.

The High School juniors have, for the 11th year in succession, qualified for the National Schools finals, by winning the semi-final event held at Prestatyn, while Jesse Gray finished equal third in the same competition, the highest placing by any state school. On top of that both the High School under 9 teams qualified for the finals too, finishing first and third in their section; the first time in the event's history that one school has had three teams in the finals at the same time! Many of these children are already members of different clubs and I, as well as other coaching colleagues, continue to encourage juniors to join a chess club.

Closer to home, under Rob Richmond's guidance, our own congress goes from strength to strength and we have now developed an excellent relationship with the High School; they are more than willing to allow us regular use of the school as a venue for many of our events – this also includes NPSCA events too!

Any player in this association can be proud of being a part of Notts chess; many of our officers, past and present, have played a significant part in English chess, taking office in the BCF and the ECF, as well as the MCCU; the NPSCA too plays a significant part in English junior chess.

My heartfelt thanks to all officers who have worked so hard in their different roles and supported me over the last two years

I look forward, hopefully, to one more year as your President. When I am finally forced to step down I hope to leave the NCA stronger than ever, as other Presidents have done before me.

Secretary

Andrew Walker

It has again been a quiet year, with only routine activities.

Treasurer

Robert Richmond

The surplus for 2007/08 was £607 (£759) and the total funds of the association are now £7,424 (£6,817), plus the unrecorded value of sets, boards, clocks and stationery. Note 2 to the accounts gives more detail on the County Championship, Rapidplay and Congress and note 3 is a brief note on some of the variations in receipts and costs for other items in the Income & Expenditure Account.

Comments on the figures

The overall deficit on tournaments reduced by nearly £200. The Congress and Rapidplay are in surplus, but this is offset by the increased loss on the County Championship.

General expenditure has increased from just over £400 to nearly £800 – and this is supposedly the more stable part of the accounts. This is due to the following:

- A lot of one-offs this year – Purchase of record card (£50) and new Boards (£57), Trophy repairs (£40), and possibly County U18/U13 entry (£45)
- Artificially low costs in 2006/7 – Website (£52) and Blitz (£30) – the latter as a result of moving the date from May in 2006 to June in 2007, so there was no event in the 2006/7 accounts.
- Increase in County match costs (£80), always a volatile item, and one that varies with the success of the teams in reaching the national stages.

County Matches

The Executive Committee agreed on 21/2/2008 the following statement on the support given to County teams:

'NCA will pay for Entry Fees, Game Fee and Room Hire for County Matches. At home matches players will contribute a nominal amount to cover the cost of refreshments.'

Fees 2008/09

The Executive decided to recommend a small reduction from £57/£55 to £55/£44 in league fees for next season at the meeting on 24 April. Drag Sudar has indicated he will propose a bigger reduction to £45 / £36. This will reduce income by £470 based on the current league size of 38 teams. Prospects for next year are good. General expenditure should go down, a free venue at Nottingham High School for the County Championship should make a big dent in the deficit and the congress could produce a bigger surplus.

Executive committee

EC has met regularly through the season, and has also communicated among ourselves by e-mail. Compared with last season, Ian Kingston decided to stand down, and we co-opted Kevin Harvey in his place. Key issues for us this season have been:

- Financial oversight of the affairs of the NCA. We have received regular reports from the Treasurer, and have been pleased to note that our finances continue to be healthy. We have been considering creative ways of making use of our reserves to further the aims of the NCA.
- Monitoring activities of the NCA. For the most part, these have operated smoothly. There have been issues with county teams, which we have attempted to resolve; but occasionally we have been frustrated by problems from outside the county.
- Publicity and related activities. These have been reported in NN, but have included the Victoria Baths Fun Day, the up-

coming Robin Hood Marathon and arrangements for the Congress and other NCA events. We had hoped to have more news about gaining our own premises, but there has been little progress this year.

- ◆ 'Blue sky' and other initiatives. We remain very conscious of the need to attract juniors into chess, and especially to help them make the transition into adult chess. We have also been considering provision for disabled players, and how best to proceed with a membership [or registration] scheme; these have given rise to discussion papers at the RRM, with further action planned. In addition, we feel that EC needs to evolve into a Board, under an Executive Officer; this too has given rise to a discussion paper.

We have again been aware that our activities have primarily been reported via items in NN, and that our formal minutes have not been communicated to clubs and individuals as well as they should. We will consider ways of improving this.

League Secretary

Robert Richmond

I cannot improve on the report by Ian last year – a quiet and largely uneventful season, with only one dispute. Defaulted matches increased from 2 in 2006/7 to 3 last season, but defaults of individual Boards reduced from 36 to 23.

The Rules Revision Meeting approved two changes. Results can now be submitted by e-mail and both teams are required to submit it. LMC approval is now only required for out-county players graded or of estimated strength of 150 (previously all out-county players, except juniors).

At the time of writing (27 June) it looks as if the league will increase to either 40 or 41 teams, with additional teams of Nomads 4, Long Eaton 2 and possibly West Nottingham 8.

My particular thanks to Ian for his help and advice in my first season as League Secretary. He will be a very hard act to follow as Records Secretary and elsewhere.

Records Secretary

Ian Kingston

League results were, for the most part, reported promptly and efficiently by captains, with many submitting provisional results via email. Nevertheless, it was necessary at one point in the season to issue a reminder to captains to post their match cards promptly – the least attractive part of the RS's job is the need to chase missing results. The rule changes introduced at the RRM should improve the reporting of results and reduce the load on the RS.

The other problem area remains obtaining details of new and returning players. Clubs and captains are reminded that the RS is neither psychic nor in possession of players' details from 15 years ago. (I will supply a list of players from the three years of my tenure to the incoming RS, which should partially alleviate the problem.)

Congress Director

Robert Richmond

Rapidplay (20 January): The entry was up from 75 in 2007 to 102, which converted last year's deficit of £68 to a surplus of £84 and allowed additional prizes in the Minor. Next year entry will be free to Notts juniors.

Congress (19–20 April): I wish to record my thanks to Nottingham High School for giving us the venue free this year. The entry was also up from 106 to 142 exceeded the most optimistic expectations and we were sadly turning away

entries in the final week. Again last year's deficit was turned into a surplus of £199 and there were additional prizes in the Minor. Next year's planning will be on the basis of 160, using the science lab to take 20 in addition to the 140 in the refectory. Free entry will be restricted to Notts juniors.

My thanks to Neil Graham and John Swain for controlling, David Levens for organising and the various mums for running the tea and coffee – Anne Lim, Ruth Thurgood, Manjit Nijran, Malti Maini, and Penny Mackay; and apologies if I've missed anyone.

Grading Officer

Brian Hayward

I have sent the results of games played in the Notts League (1179 games) and Notts County Championships (84 games) off to the ECF grader. There were 258 active players in the League. Tables 1 and 2 may be of interest.

Ian Kingston reported in *Notts News* (27/10/2007) proposals by the ECF to address perceived deflation in the grades of players. I understand that for next season only, players will

Table 1 The number of active players per club in Notts League seasons 2004/05 to 2007/08.

Club	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Ashfield	23	24	29	28
Bunkers/Navigation	18	22	21	20
Fiveways	11	10	7	0
Gambit	26	28	28	24
Grantham	14	13	14	13
Long Eaton	19	18	8	10
Mansfield	13	12	11	10
Newark	18	17	13	15
Nomads (Notts)	21	22	17	23
Nottm University	31	36	35	29
Radcliffe & Bingham	11	13	16	12
West Bridgford	12	13	14	14
West Nottingham	39	54	43	60
Totals	256	282	256	258

Table 2 Distribution of playing strength between clubs League Season 2007/08.

Club	ECF grade						Total
	<50	50–99	100–124	125–149	150–174	>174	
Ashfield	3	7	10	2	5	1	28
Gambit	2	7	7	4	2	2	24
Grantham	0	5	3	1	3	1	13
Long Eaton	0	3	0	4	1	2	10
Mansfield	0	1	3	3	2	1	10
Navigation	1	8	6	4	1	0	20
Newark	0	4	5	3	3	0	15
Nomads (Notts)	4	8	8	2	1	0	23
Nottm University	2	9	4	6	7	1	29
Radcliffe & Bingham	2	5	4	1	0	0	12
West Bridgford	0	5	4	2	1	2	14
West Nottingham	19	17	9	10	4	1	60
Clubs Total	33	79	63	42	30	11	258
%	12.79	30.62	24.42	16.28	11.63	4.26	100

have two grades, one calculated as now, which will be the one included in the traditional printed list, and used for grading restricted competitions next season, and one adjusted to address the issues of deflation, which will be published on the web site. Deflation has had a greater impact upon players with lower grades, so the lower your grade the more you can expect the adjustment to increase it. For the season after next, players can expect to have one grade adjusted for deflation and any regional imbalances.

Webmaster

Ian Kingston

Very few changes to the web site have been made since last season, apart from the routine updating of results and news. The archive section has not grown as intended because of pressure on time.

The site is receiving significantly more traffic than last season. To give just one example: in the last week of the 2006–07 season there were 789 sessions served (excluding search engine robots); in the equivalent week this season that number rose to 1227 sessions.

The domain name is due for renewal in August. I will arrange for the domain to be transferred to my successor following the AGM.

Bulletin editor

Ian Kingston

There have been 42 issues (140 pages) of *Notts News* published during the 2007–08 season, compared with 40 issues (96 pages) in 2005–06 and 46 issues (132 pages) in 2006–07. During the season I have tried to include more chess than previously, as well as reporting more ECF-related material, as requested at last year's AGM. This probably explains the increased page count.

I am grateful, as always, to the large number of contributors – far too many to name – without whom the job would be impossible.

As outgoing editor, I wish to make one point. I firmly believe that frequent, regular communication between an organisation and its members is essential to the health of that organisation. Consequently, I hope that whoever takes over will be able to maintain a weekly publication schedule, at least as far as the reporting of results is concerned. There may even be a case for making this a two-person job: one to deal with league results and the other to handle other reports.

County Championship

Ian Kingston

Numbers fell from last year's peak of 56 to just 37 this season (although it should be remembered that the latter figure is still well up on recent years). Of particular concern was the near-total absence of players graded over 150 – a statistic that calls into question the viability of the competition in its present format. The reduction in numbers was probably due to the late announcement of the event following difficulties in finding a suitable replacement venue after last year's venue proved to be unavailable.

The event itself ran smoothly and without incident. David Levens and Neil Graham deserve special mention for their efforts in securing the venue.

Special events

Ian Kingston

The season-opening jamboree tournament, held at the Navigation and co-organised by Kevin Harvey was a great success. I would encourage the Association to repeat this.

I apologise to the Association for not having been able to organise the Blitz Championship this season. In what has been a difficult year for me personally this proved to be just one task too many.

Handicap knockout

Ian Kingston

Although the finish of the tournament was delayed because the University's vacation prevented one of the semi-finals from being played on time, the tournament ran smoothly.

The attempt to even up the handicap by decreasing the amount of time available for very large grading differences does not appear to have worked. The stronger teams still win most of the matches. Worse, that change discouraged a few teams from entering for fear that the handicap would be too strict. I find that attitude disappointing – the handicap is *supposed* to make life difficult for stronger players, and perhaps clubs should have looked at ways of structuring their teams so as to make the handicap work in their favour, rather than simply pulling out.

Nevertheless, the detail of the handicap needs looking at. In addition, efforts need to be made to encourage all clubs to participate – some clubs have not entered the competition since the present format was adopted.

Minutes: General ['Rules Revision'] Meeting

Meeting held at West Bridgford CC at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday 3 June 2008

Present

D. G. Levens [President, in the Chair], A. N. Walker [Secretary], R. Richmond [Treasurer], D. Gold, N. Graham, B. M. Hayward, F. R. Hill, M. J. Hill, C. Holt, I. Kingston, N. London, D. Sudar, M. V. Taylor, T. Walker, R. Webster.

Apologies, minutes of previous meetings

Apologies were received from S. J. Burke and J. T. Swain. The meeting noted with regret that two previous officers of the Association, L. Darby and Mrs J. Waddingham had passed away since the AGM. Draft minutes of the 2007 AGM had appeared in *NN* and were circulated with the papers for the meeting. Delegates were asked to let the Secretary know of any corrections.

Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

Proposed changes to League Rules

I. Kingston introduced his proposal, see *NN* 36, that e-mail be allowable for the reporting of match results. It was expected that this would become the most usual way to report results, but record cards would continue to be used for those captains without e-mail access. M. J. Hill asked whether it was necessary for both captains to report; it was agreed that, with safeguards, it was sufficient for the home captain, as at present, to do so. B. M. Hayward pointed out the problems caused for grading if there were corrections. The proposed solution was for each captain to use a match card, which could be exchanged to receive the opposing team, be signed by both captains, and be kept in case of dispute. The 'best practice' procedure could be printed on the cards. The proposal was agreed unanimously.

R. J. Richmond introduced his proposal, see *NN* 36, to simplify procedures for new 'out-county' players. M. J. Hill queried whether it was still appropriate to equate ECF grade 150 with Elo 1800. D. Sudar suggested that '(Elo 1800)' be dropped from the proposal; it was agreed that the phrase 'is graded or of estimated strength of over 150' sufficed, and could encompass not only Elo ratings but also other national ratings as necessary. D. Sudar also suggested that 'or study' be added after 'reside or work'; this too was agreed. With these amendments, the proposal was agreed unanimously.

Disability issues

The President described the proposals, see *NN* 36. Chess could be played at the highest levels by disabled players, and we had a moral as well as a legal responsibility to facilitate their play in the league. It was pointed out that clubs with unsuitable premises could play away, given notice, when disabled players were in the opposing team. B. M. Hayward noted that the owners of premises had duties too. The LMC was asked to formulate a definite proposal, to come to next year's RRM. N. Graham wanted to see if a voluntary code would work; R. Richmond asked that affected clubs should report their status to the LMC, and they they should be warned that there could be legislation next year. The President asked that this be noted for *NN*; C. Holt said that the information already gathered about disabled access should

be amplified, for example to include information about access to toilets.

Discussion paper on Executive Board

The Secretary introduced this discussion paper, see *NN*. The intention is to formalise the role of EC, to return the role of the Presidency to that of a figurehead, and to assign the President's *de facto* executive role to a new Executive Officer, not bound by the three-year rule. No constitutional changes were forced by this proposal, but some were desirable. B. M. Hayward said that the MCCU had had a figurehead President, but no-one had known who he was; this was not thought to be an insuperable obstacle. D. Sudar said that he thought AGMs should continue to elect officers and receive reports; it was pointed out that this was still possible under the proposals, but was not enforced, which could simplify the AGM. D. Sudar and N. Graham wanted a more formal definition of the membership of the proposed EB, as agreed at the 2007 AGM; but it was argued that this need not be specified by the constitution. A straw poll approved the principle by 10 votes to 0 with 3 abstentions. It was agreed that a definite proposal should go to the AGM or perhaps to an SGM.

Discussion paper on membership

The Treasurer introduced his discussion paper, see *NN* 37, with a view to presenting definite proposals to a general meeting. The principal options were *status quo*, membership through clubs without voting rights, and individual membership with voting rights. His own preference was for option 2. D. Sudar said that even this would require changes to the constitution. M. J. Hill pointed out that it would require action by club secretaries, and B. M. Hayward said that it was better to work through the clubs. I. Kingston asked whether many of the objections both now and at a previous SGM would be met if the scheme were described as 'registration' rather than 'membership', and this met with some approval. N. London pointed out that we needed to be aware of implications under the Data Protection Act.

Option 2 was approved *nem con*.

President's report

The President said that numbers playing in the League and in clubs had been declining for many years, but this had been halted to an extent by an influx of juniors. Most sports had a junior policy, and juniors become adults. The Congress had gone from strength to strength, and had helped us to establish beneficial links with the High School.

Any other business

In response to a reminder from I. Kingston that he would be relinquishing several jobs at the AGM, the President said this was a general problem, and it would be very helpful if more people at least did a little to help.

D. Sudar said that he would be pressing for League fees to be reduced.

The President said that he wanted to reorganise the AGM, which should be a business meeting of elections and prizes, with no extraneous items. D. Sudar said that officers must report to the AGM, but M. J. Hill said they could report to *NN*, but it was important that a programme of events was produced.

The President also reminded delegates of the Robin Hood Marathon, on September 14th, where he, Alex Posazhennikov

and Kevin Harvey would be running, plus ten others in the 'fun run', and he would be giving a simultaneous display. Other runners and supporters were welcome. This would raise our profile, with an NCA tent and T-shirts.

N. Graham asked whether the Treasurer could say more about recent events at ECF; but he could add little.

The Secretary enquired about the Fun Day at Victoria Baths on May 31st, where K. Harvey had organised a chess event; it had been well attended, and had led to an invitation to exhibit at the Sneinton Festival. He also reminded delegates about the AGM, and said that the recent *ChessMoves* had contained an article about charitable status, which could affect the NCA and some clubs.

Meeting closed at 9:40pm.